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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Weaving Brings Income and Change

USAID works with Afghan women to be active players in the economic development of their communities



Photo Courtesy USAID/IRD

Women in Eastern Afghanistan like Musharaba are now enjoying newfound confidence and skills in carpet weaving and literacy that was not available until recently.

The initiative is part of the Strategic Provincial Roads program where rural roads are built and rehabilitated in tandem with the development of rural communities living alongside these roads.

In Eastern Afghanistan's Laghman Province, women have few opportunities to work outside of the home or go to school. However, carpet weaving has emerged as a way for women to earn income and support their families.

Although carpet weaving is traditionally more prevalent in Afghanistan's northern regions, the USAID-funded Strategic Provincial Roads program introduced carpet weaving to the east in October 2009, through the community-based Supporting Women in Skills Entrepreneurship and Literacy grant aimed to support women's skills, entrepreneurship, and literacy.

One such community benefiting from USAID's grant is Mandrawor Village, a mainly agricultural-based community. Women traditionally assist with raising animals and farming, but carpet weaving initiatives have taken off in the Mandrawor.

Twenty-three year old Musharaba is one of 25 ambitious young women in her community (and one of 630 in Eastern Afghanistan) benefiting from the project. She hopes to establish her own carpet business. In addition, Musharaba wants to give back to other women and teach them basic literacy.

"During the last six months of the training, I believe I have learned enough to train other women and I am planning to launch my own business and will encourage my fellow trainees to work as a group and promote carpet weaving in our district by producing good quality carpets and helping our families meet their basic needs," said Musharaba.

Community development activities such as this one empower women, foster support and ownership of new USAID constructed roads, and provide sustainable employment once the roads are constructed. Musharaba is one of those women ready to expand her business along the roads.

Through this program, USAID and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan advance gender equality to help women gain access to jobs, generate income, and contribute to their families and communities.